

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY KISSINGER

FROM : Roger Morris *Romer*

SUBJECT: Haile Selassie's Stop in Atlanta

The following is a complete run-down (most of it I have only second-hand) on the origin of the stop, my involvement in the scheduling, the authority for the final decision, and the current status.

1. The idea apparently originated some months before the visit in routine conversations between the Emperor's advisors and our Embassy officials in Addis Ababa. The Ethiopians said the Emperor much admired King and would like to honor his memory on any future visit to the United States. When serious planning began for the visit in May-June, the Embassy forwarded this information to State as one of its suggestions for a suitable stop in the schedule.

2. State saw nothing unusual in Ethiopians raising the idea. King is an established hero throughout Africa, and his non-violence is particularly apt for leaders like Haile Selassie who are trying to be progressive without opening the door to left-wing radicals.

3. Once the President's invitation to Haile Selassie was announced, discussions began with the Ethiopians on a schedule. The matter of Atlanta came up again, but our Embassy only took note and made no commitments. Shortly after the public announcement, I understand Morehouse College in Atlanta let it be known to State that it would like to give the Emperor an honorary degree. The degree idea is also routine for African visitors: President Tubman of Liberia, for example, got such a degree at Morehouse last fall. But State told Morehouse at the time only that we were considering their request and we would let them know.

4. About two weeks ago I got a phone call from Sam Westerfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. Westerfield said that

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the African Bureau and Embassy Addis Ababa felt strongly that we should let the Emperor lay a wreath at King's grave, and also meet the request of Morehouse to give him an honorary degree at the same time. Westerfield said there was a hitch, however, because Ambassador Mosbacher, who is responsible for visit planning, had misgivings about the stop. Specifically, Mosbacher thought there might be a reaction against the Emperor in the black community of Atlanta. Westerfield said that Mosbacher was worried that the Emperor's autocratic rule and preservation of feudalism in Ethiopia would invite picketing by black militants.

Westerfield asked if I could give him a political reading on this question. I replied that I was not competent to judge what the black community in Atlanta thought of Haile Selassie, but we should certainly avoid any embarrassing incidents. I told Westerfield that I understood State had their own channels on such questions to the political side of the White House. But, for whatever use it might be, I would get in touch with Robert Brown, who I understood to be the President's Special Assistant for minority problems, and ask Brown to double check that there would be the necessary reading on Mosbacher's question from the domestic side of the White House.

5. I then called Brown, explaining Westerfield's request. I told Brown that Ambassador Mosbacher was in charge of the planning for the visit, and he (Brown) or someone appropriate should get in touch with Mosbacher and Westerfield directly to provide the necessary reading if it hadn't been given routinely. Brown said off-hand that he saw no problem for the Emperor with the Atlanta black community, that he thought the visit was a good idea "in every respect," and would get in touch with Mosbacher after he had checked the problem out.

I talked no more with Brown, Westerfield, or anybody else on the matter.

6. I understand that the African Bureau raised the question of the stop with Secretary Rogers last week, just prior to the Secretary's trip with the President to Canada. Last Saturday, the African Bureau was told by the 7th floor the visit was OK. On Monday of this week, the African Bureau was told by Sam King (Mosbacher's Deputy in Protocol) that Mosbacher had approved the stop in Atlanta on explicit authority from Secretary Rogers. (I was not privy at the time to any of these developments over last weekend, and I only learned about them today in checking.)

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7. Thus, on the authority of the Secretary, State moved ahead to schedule the stop with the Ethiopians and arranged for the honorary degree from Morehouse. The schedule has been handed out routinely to the press, and arrangements have been made in Atlanta for a two-hour stop by the Emperor. He will lay a wreath at King's grave in a ten-minute ceremony and then go to Morehouse College for a thirty-minute ceremony to receive the honorary degree. He then departs promptly for Cape Kennedy.

Turning it Off

From a foreign policy point of view, my judgement is that it would be embarrassing but not impossible to get out of the stop with the Ethiopians. The Emperor has always been a good and discreet friend of the United States, and there would be minimum risk of any leaks from him or his government. The omission of the stop would probably go largely unnoticed in the rest of Africa. (I should add, however, that inclusion of the stop would be noticed in Africa, and would clearly be a plus for the U.S. image. African opinion would see the laying of the wreath as an acknowledgement by the U.S. of King's international stature, and thus a positive sign of our commitment on the racial question. Beyond these judgements, though, I cannot advise you as to what the impact will be domestically of a cancellation at this point. A lot of people know in Atlanta, and the Washington or New York press could easily pick it up and play it at will.

In sum: I was aware, as described above, of some doubts about the reception which the Emperor might be given by the black community in Atlanta. But at no point did I give anyone, formally or informally, a go-ahead, judgement, etc. on the domestic political issue of the Emperor's stop. As I told Westerfield when he raised the matter, this was strictly out of my competence or authority, and that is why I referred the question forthwith to Robert Brown. It was my understanding that, as a matter of routine, State's Protocol does a political check with the domestic side of the White House on such questions, and the NSC staff is simply not involved on these aspects of the trip. Finally, as ^{if} counted above, I understand the Atlanta stop was considered specifically and approved directly by the Secretary of State.

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Strictly on foreign policy grounds -- to get good public mileage out of the visit for the U. S. in Africa; to accommodate the Ethiopians wherever possible when we have to refuse their request for massive military aid; and even to help give the Emperor a more progressive and thus more durable image in Ethiopia where he is the best insurance for our important interests there such as the Kagnev intercept station -- I would have thought the visit made sense. But this would only be the case, obviously, if the responsible people could make a careful calculation that there would be no risk on the domestic side of racial incidents involving the Emperor, and thus embarrassing everybody.

As a footnote to the sequence described above, Al Haig asked me this morning to check on possible problems with the stop. I understood from Al that this had to do with potential racial trouble in Atlanta that could involve the Emperor and thus embarrass us. I told Al what I knew (the background above) about this, and said I would check again with Brown.

I called Brown, but he was on his way to a meeting in Mississippi. I then called John Price on Moynahan's staff, to whom Brown's office referred me. Price said he would look into the problem and call back. Meanwhile, Bruce Rabb, from Browns staff, called to ask if he could help in his boss' absence. I explained my request of Price. Rabb said he'd coordinate with Price and call me back. So far (8:15) I haven't heard from either.

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